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INTERNATIONAL HUMANITARIAN RESPONSES TO CRISES AND CONFLICTS: CURRENT CHALLENGES



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Political and Social Affairs Division

January 1995



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INTERNATIONAL HUMANITARIAN RESPONSES TO CRISES AND CONFLICTS: CURRENT CHALLENGES

INTERVENTION AND HUMANITARIAN RESPONSE IN THE CONTEXT OF THE 1990s

Responding to wars and disasters, whether natural or man-made, is certainly not a new element of international relations. The need to mobilize international efforts on behalf of the victims of conflicts and humanitarian emergencies has led to the creation of respected impartial relief organizations such as the International Committee of the Red Cross. Since the end of the Second World War, nation-states have also become increasingly involved in issues of international humanitarian assistance--through their membership in the United Nations and other multilateral organizations, and through adherence to a developing system of international humanitarian law and practice (notably codified in the Geneva conventions and protocols).

This system is no doubt highly imperfect. Millions of people have continued to die in tragedies that many consider to be preventable. Natural disasters, such as the Ethiopian famine of the mid-1980s, are often compounded by, or even linked causally to, political and civil conflicts. In such cases, there is no substitute for war prevention and sustainable development strategies if similar emergencies are not to recur. Nevertheless, even in the worst situations, short-term relief operations have sometimes been successful in saving many lives.

In the post-Cold War era, there were initial hopes that the relaxation of East-West tensions would produce a "dividend" that could be applied to peaceful purposes. While world military expenditures have been declining overall, there continue to be regional arms races. And the sums spent on armaments are still many times the amounts devoted to international development assistance. Indeed, spending on global aid has dropped significantly since 1993, and a rising proportion of it has gone towards emergency humanitarian relief--in itself a

worrisome sign that the world is not becoming a more peaceful or orderly place. Indeed a number of recent books and essays forecast an international arena that will be increasingly conflictive and unruly, divided over issues of resources and economic disparity, the environment, ethno-nationalism, minority rights, movements of peoples, etc.⁽¹⁾

The strengthened role of the UN post-1989, manifested by its precedent-setting intervention to protect Kurdish civilians in northern Iraq in the aftermath of the 1991 Gulf War, had also raised hopes that the international community might henceforth intervene more forcefully, including when necessary in the "internal affairs" of a member state, in order to offer humanitarian protection to people in imminent danger as a result of a calamitous event. However, the rapid escalation since then in the number, scale and scope of such humanitarian interventions has produced some sobering, even disastrous, experiences. No one looking at the recent record of responses in Bosnia, Somalia, and Rwanda--to take only three obvious examples--can feel very confident about the outcome of these hugely complicated and troubled interventions.

Early in 1995 there is arguably a greater need than ever for more concerted and better coordinated international humanitarian missions. One analyst has observed that one out of 130 persons on the planet has now been displaced by wars,⁽²⁾ the vast majority of which are civil, not classical inter-state aggressions. Fully 89 of 92 major conflicts (those producing over 1,000 deaths) since 1989 fall into the former category. In some cases the civil disorder is so severe that there is effectively no functioning "sovereign" governmental authority, leading to the phenomenon of "failed states." Vast refugee flows may also destabilize neighbouring countries and disrupt wider peace and security. Increasingly, there have been appeals to international authority, principally the UN, for help in situations where neither consent of the parties nor neutrality in the traditional sense of "peacekeeping" may be possible to establish.

(1) See, for example, Matthew Horsman and Andrew Marshall, *After the Nation-State: Citizens, Tribalism and the New World Disorder*, Harper Collins, London, 1994; Robert Kaplan, "The Coming Anarchy," *The Atlantic Monthly*, February 1994, and Matthew Connelly and Paul Kennedy, "Must it be the Rest Against the West?," *The Atlantic Monthly*, December 1994; Wallace Thies, "Rethinking the New World Order," *Orbis*, Fall 1994, p. 621-34.

(2) Thomas Weiss, "The United Nations and Civil Wars," *The Washington Quarterly*, Autumn 1994, p. 140.

There has been an explosion of peace operations under UN auspices; 17 are currently ongoing, compared to only 13 in the first four decades of this activity. Several of the most controversial and costly of these operations are in response to combined security and humanitarian crises of immense proportions. To the extent that funding and contributions from UN members can be cobbled together, such missions mix political, military and civilian roles, creating a new phenomenon in which "peacemaking" is brought together with emergency humanitarian relief operations. The resulting improvisations, trial and error, have put enormous strains on an antiquated system already overdue for reform. Even if the financial and structural problems of the UN could be resolved, it will never be an easy task to achieve coordination among more than a dozen UN agencies, regional organizations, individual donor governments and their military establishments, not to mention the thousands of non-governmental organizations involved on the ground.

Beyond the practical difficulties of sustaining large-scale operations in a number of places, vigorous debate continues on the fundamental question of whether limits ought to be placed around the new imperatives of humanitarian intervention. Notwithstanding that nation-state sovereignty is losing ground as a shield against such interventions to aid victims of disasters, some argue that it is not wise or realistic to move too far in the other direction of advocating "a new humanitarian order in which governments are held--by force, if necessary--to higher standards of respect for human life."⁽³⁾ Some find the concept of "armed humanitarianism"--the use of military forces to protect the delivery of humanitarian assistance and to defend human life and human rights--to be an oxymoron or at least a potentially dangerous paradox.

Many relief agencies are uncomfortable with the implications of "enforcement" actions. For example, in Somalia, the blurring of political-military and humanitarian operations resulted in the loss of local legitimacy, severely hampering subsequent international NGO efforts.⁽⁴⁾ It is also argued that much more attention should be focused on early non-military means of intervening before crises turn into catastrophes and conflicts escalate out of control.

(3) Stephen John Stedman, "The New Interventionists," *Foreign Affairs*, Vol. 72, No. 1, 1993, p. 3, citing Francis Deng and Larry Minear, *The Challenge of Famine Relief: Emergency Operations in the Sudan*, 1992.

(4) See Daneesh Sarooshi, *Humanitarian Intervention and International Humanitarian Assistance: Law and Practice*, Wilton Park Paper No. 86, London, November 1993, p. 25-27.

However, setting criteria for early "soft" interventions in order to prevent disasters is not likely to be a simple matter, especially given the growing range of situations that could call for such attention today and the budgetary pressures on parliaments and governments around the world. It is no doubt apparent in hindsight, as a new Worldwatch Institute study calculates, that successful prevention will be much less costly all round, and certainly in the long run, than the bill for cleaning up a humanitarian disaster.⁽⁵⁾ Unfortunately, national and international decisionmaking are seldom able to be so farsighted. Moreover, when prevention strategies fail, for whatever reasons, the international community will again be faced with a familiar host of questions surrounding the determination of its response to the newest disaster: authorization and mandates; finances; what kinds of contributions and from whom; command and control structures; size and duration of missions; coordination issues, etc.

Recently, a number of governments (including Canada), and indeed the UN Security Council itself, have given increased consideration to the application of stricter, more selective conditions to future international interventions. There can be no question of reverting to a bygone era of bipolar stalemate and "non-intervention" (which in fact meant in practice that intervention was left to big powers operating in "spheres of influence"). The current argument for limits is that international commitments must be deliberate and credible in order to be made effective. In setting criteria for humanitarian interventions, however, scholar Robert Jackson cautions that in international relations: "what the most responsible choice would be in any particular case is not something that can be determined in principle or in advance. ... International ethics are always situational, and most international situations are difficult to assess."⁽⁶⁾ In other words, we should not expect any "planners' dream" set of conditions to emerge that could predetermine the ideal international response to the next humanitarian emergency.

Another challenge facing international humanitarian assistance is that tragedies such as the Rwandan genocide have demonstrated the severe limitations of existing response mechanisms and relief practices when confronted with a situation of this magnitude and

(5) Michael Renner, *Budgeting for Disarmament: The Costs of War and Peace*, Washington D.C., The Worldwatch Institute, 1995. For a brief review and analysis see David Fairhall, "Why Not Budget for Peace?", *The Ottawa Citizen*, 20 January 1995, p. A9.

(6) Robert H. Jackson, "Armed Humanitarianism," *International Journal*, special issue on "humane intervention," Autumn 1993, p. 605.

perversity. Dr. John Watson, head of CARE (Canada), one of the largest humanitarian relief NGOs, has bluntly observed: "Forty years of experience in all corners of the world in the worst imaginable conditions did not prepare us for the Rwandan disaster."⁽⁷⁾

While mounting a rapid relief operation for over a million refugees was "technically very impressive," the grim realities of the planned genocide and its aftermath repeatedly defied the best intentions of the different components of the international response. For example, it is usually argued that humanitarian relief should be strictly neutral; problems arise when it gets mixed up with more aggressive UN "peacemaking" actions.⁽⁸⁾ But in Rwanda, relief agencies were severely criticized by human rights organizations for giving sanctuary and resources to genocidal killers. As Africa Rights put it: "Seeking justice for human rights abuses is not compatible with mounting 'neutral' aid programs under the authority of those responsible for committing the human rights abuses."⁽⁹⁾

This is just one of numerous examples where the hard lessons of recent experience are confounding previous assumptions and practices. Watson's unsparing conclusion from the field is that:

... the entire apparatus of humanitarian intervention in places like Rwanda, Somalia and Bosnia requires a radical rethink.

On every level of management--international, national and non-governmental--old habits, procedures and attitudes must give way.

There will be more Somalias, Rwandas and Bosnias. The tasks at hand are not insurmountable. They do require the international community to develop new and creative ways of dealing with the unique post-Cold War contexts where there is no functioning state.⁽¹⁰⁾

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- (7) A. John Watson, "How We Botched It in Rwanda," *The Globe and Mail* (Toronto), 23 December 1994, p. 12.
- (8) Jessica Matthews, "Peacemaking Paradox," *The Ottawa Citizen*, 7 December 1994.
- (9) Cited in *ibid.*
- (10) *Ibid.* See also Lionel Rosenblatt, "Ten Steps to Take Now to Avoid More Rwandas," *The Christian Science Monitor*, 11 January 1995, p. 17.

HUMANITARIAN EMERGENCY AND PEACE OPERATIONS: THE SEARCH FOR APPROPRIATE AND BETTER RESPONSES

A. The Role of the United Nations

The first half of the 1990s has been the most extraordinary period of expanding UN activities in the history of the organization. But the new opportunities have come with a price in terms of onerous costs and sometimes cruel consequences. In 1995, in its fiftieth anniversary year, the 185-member world body is at another critical juncture.

In the wake of the breakthrough humanitarian intervention following the UN-sanctioned war against Iraq, and other complex interventions in Cambodia and El Salvador in 1991, the new Secretary General, Boutros Boutros-Ghali, in June 1992 produced a report, *Agenda for Peace*, to the Security Council, outlining an ambitious program for UN involvement across a broad spectrum of conflict resolution and "preventive diplomacy" measures. According to this vision, a renewed and reformed UN would be endowed with greatly enhanced emergency response capabilities: military as well as civilian. But early in 1995, this complex agenda, and the actual performance of UN roles, are being subjected to much sober second thought, some of it very critical indeed, within as well as outside the institution. Boutros-Ghali's update of *Agenda for Peace*, presented on 6 January, repeated the call for a "rapid-reaction force" under UN command. However, in an atmosphere of retrenchment and lack of consensus, a planned summit of the Security Council has been indefinitely postponed.⁽¹¹⁾

While reassessment seems in order, it is unlikely that the UN can pull back from the realities of humanitarian crises in today's world. It must try to act or risk the charge of irrelevant impotence. International legal and human rights scholars argue that what is essentially "domestic" as separate from "international" jurisdiction has shrunk considerably since the UN Charter was put in place. Combined with the humanitarian imperatives, the result is inevitably that the UN will be drawn into higher-risk situations. First in Somalia, then Bosnia, the Security

(11) Cf. "Winds of Change: The United Nations at 50," *The New Internationalist*, special issue No. 262, December 1994; Bruce Clarke, "Each State for Itself," *Financial Times of London*, 6 January 1995; Barbara Crossette, "Conflicts Spark Debate on Role," *The Ottawa Citizen*, 27 December 1994; Julia Preston, "Massive World Body Resists Shaping Up," *The Washington Post*, 3 January 1995; Barbara Crossette, "UN Leader to Call for Changes in Peacekeeping," *The New York Times*, 3 January 1995; "UN Chief Chides Security Council on Military Missions," *The New York Times*, 6 January 1995; Lucia Mouat, "Peacekeeping Fatigue Sets in As Risks Rise for UN Troops," *The Christian Science Monitor*, 4-5 January 1995.

Council authorized the use of its strongest measures--the use of force ("all necessary means") under Chapter 7 of the Charter--to safeguard the delivery of humanitarian relief within the boundaries of a state. Under these exceptional conditions, it is not surprising that the record to date has been very mixed and often ambiguous. As described by Thomas Weiss:

Recent UN operations are typically far larger and more dangerous than previous undertakings. They are often carried out in countries in the throes of internal conflicts, which is not what the UN's founders intended. Nor has previous UN involvement in such conflicts been among its most successful ventures. In addition, recent UN efforts have been distinguished by their comprehensive nature. Increasingly, the organization deploys "multifunctional" or, perhaps more accurately, "messy" operations that combine military, civil administration (including election monitoring and police support), and humanitarian expertise with political negotiations and mediation.⁽¹²⁾

Dealing with the chronic problems of patched-together and usually underfunded UN operations is a long-term task. Since 1991, considerable efforts have been directed to streamlining and strengthening humanitarian emergency capacities. The post of Under Secretary General for Humanitarian Affairs was established, heading a revamped 150-person Department of Humanitarian Affairs (DHA) within the UN Secretariat, with a mandate from the General Assembly for "coordinating and facilitating" emergency responses and a US\$50 million revolving fund for rapid first action in emergencies. The DHA is still a fledgling instrument of humanitarian diplomacy. It has been struggling to bring more coherence to the international community's responses to major crises and disasters. But it does not have the power to direct or command operations. The first UN humanitarian "maestro," Jan Eliasson, stepped down in early 1994 in some frustration at the slow pace of progress in overcoming bureaucratic turf issues and establishing an efficient partnership in which all parts of the UN's responsive systems can work with other humanitarian actors.⁽¹³⁾

Sweeping reform proposals to consolidate, and in effect centralize, humanitarian functions and operations, are likely to be resisted. However, a recent detailed examination of

(12) Weiss (1994), p. 139.

(13) Cf. Erskine Childers with Brian Urquhart, *Renewing the United Nations System*, Dag Hammarskjöld Foundation, Uppsala, 1994, chapter VII, p.112-18; Larry Minear and Thomas Weiss, "Wanted: New Chief for UN Humanitarian-Aid Program," *The Christian Science Monitor*, 10 January 1994.

the Rwandan response done for the Canadian government, suggests more modest innovations to improve overall response capabilities. Commenting on the lead role of the UN High Commission for Refugees (UNHCR), the paper applauds the development of relief "service packages" (e.g. providing clean water, air traffic functions) which can then be taken up by a particular country or organization. It also observes the benefits of having military personnel seconded to the humanitarian operation. But the study does not minimize the problems of relief camps harbouring human rights abusers, or the restriction whereby the UNHCR's mandate prevents it from extending help to internally displaced persons. Organizationally, moreover, it is clear that such established UN agencies will dwarf whatever role the Secretariat's DHA can have on the ground. The author therefore recommends against creating DHA field unit capacities in competition with the existing humanitarian aid system:

Rather what is needed is the ability of a handful of extremely knowledgeable individuals to deploy to the field within days of the crisis with the aim of pulling out almost completely as soon as they hand over activities to appropriate program delivery organizations from either the UN, governmental, or non-governmental sectors. Only in this way will those latter organizations see DHA as non-threatening and with a limited agenda to fear.⁽¹⁴⁾

More generally, however, it is also clear that piecemeal and ad hoc improvisations are not a sufficient response, notably in cataclysmic cases like Rwanda where the traditional aid and peacekeeping approaches failed the test, even if there were some humanitarian successes in the appalling aftermath of the genocide. If there is not a central crisis-response and disaster-relief command structure operating from UN headquarters, there is at least the need to strengthen the more limited coordination and forward planning functions of the Department of Humanitarian Affairs and to move towards having more specialized units available on standby at UN request for short-notice interventions.

(14) Paul Larose-Edwards, *The Rwandan Crisis of April 1994: The Lessons Learned*, Report prepared for the Regional Security and Peacekeeping Division, Department of Foreign Affairs and International Trade, Ottawa, November 1994, p. 33.

B. The Role of Other Multilateral Organizations

The United Nations is the preeminent but not the only international organization involved in emergency and peace operations of a humanitarian nature. Chapter 8 of the UN Charter explicitly provides a role for regional bodies in helping to maintain international peace and security. *Agenda for Peace* recognized their potential contribution, although it added little beyond the existing limited and checkered practice of regionally based interventions.⁽¹⁵⁾ More recently, the issues associated with forcible humanitarian interventions have raised the stakes, as in the case of NATO's putative role in enforcing "safe havens" in Bosnia under the UN mandate. Within a "decentralized" crisis-response scenario, the credibility of both the UN and the multilateral organization in question is more than ever on the line.

Under international law it is clear that the escalation of humanitarian assistance to include enforcement actions must be explicitly authorized by the Security Council.⁽¹⁶⁾ What is not so clear is whether regional or sub-UN bodies can effectively assume greater responsibilities on the ground, thereby lifting some of the operational burden from an overstretched UN. One cautiously pragmatic view is that "they are less substitutes for than complements to the organization [UN]. Most regional institutions have virtually no military experience or resources. They normally also contain hegemons whose presence makes legitimate intervention in civil wars problematic."⁽¹⁷⁾ The latter point applies even more to authorizations

(15) Examples that could be cited in the past decade are the efforts of the Contadora group in Central America, the Economic Community of West Africa States (ECOWAS) in Liberia, the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) in Cambodia, the Organization of American States (OAS) in Haiti, the Conference on (now renamed Organisation for) Security and Cooperation in Europe (CSCE/OSCE) in the Balkans and eastern Europe.

(16) Sarooshi (1993), p. 3-4.

(17) Weiss (1994), p. 150. A detailed case study of Somalia confirms that, although the country was a member of the Organization of African Unity, the Arab League, and the Organization of Islamic Conference, "these bodies had neither the capacity nor the willingness to help" (Samuel Makinda, *Seeking Peace from Chaos: Humanitarian Intervention in Somalia*, International Peace Academy Occasional Paper, Lynne Rienner Publishers, Boulder and London, 1993, p. 14.) As it was, the unified task force of 37,000 troops ("Operation Restore Hope") that landed in Somalia in December 1992, under the authority of the UN Security Council's first Chapter 7 armed humanitarian intervention mandate, was almost completely U.S.-led.

for actions led by a superpower: see particularly the tensions that surfaced between the United States and the UN in the Somalia and Haiti interventions.

There is some experience to suggest that, although the resources of large countries and military establishments may have to be enlisted once the worst case has happened, regional groupings of smaller countries might be able to avoid such a high-intensity resort if they were able to intervene early on through diplomatic and other conflict prevention initiatives. It may be that the relative success of the UN missions in Central America and Cambodia can be explained in part by the active preparatory presence of regional actors and multilateral support groups. From this emerges an alternative to a top-down response system that calls for further exploration:

The conventional wisdom is for the Security Council to make political decisions on behalf of the international community and then subcontract downward to a regional institution like NATO--as in the case of the former Yugoslavia--for its support services. Cambodia and El Salvador suggest the plausibility of a different model, namely, the regional institution ensures agreement among the parties and then subcontracts upward to the UN for its military, civil administration, and humanitarian services.⁽¹⁸⁾

C. Post-Cold-War Humanitarian Roles: from "Peacekeeping" to "Peacemaking"?

Historically, "peacekeeping" was a partly Canadian-inspired improvisation that took root in the 1950s when the Cold War stalemate rendered inoperative Article 43 of the UN Charter which had envisaged the UN as having a military conflict-response capability of its own. Such peacekeeping operations were generally small-scale; their principal purpose being the supervision of interstate cease-fires between sovereign member-state belligerents. This was a contained sphere of activity, almost entirely distinct from humanitarian or emergency relief operations.

In the post-Cold-War era, the context of international intervention has changed radically, although the idea of a permanent UN "rapid deployment" military force, or even standby forces under the command of the Secretary General, remains controversial and far from

(18) Weiss (1994), p. 151.

realization. The classical doctrine of the conditions necessary for successful peacekeeping missions -- a clear mandate accepted by the parties in conflict; cooperation of parties with peacekeepers in the field; adequate resources supplied by UN member states -- seldom holds in the new situations facing the international community. As the UN's top official in this area has observed, "on any particular day only a minority of the actual or potential conflicts in the world fulfil those conditions."

From simple peacekeeping has evolved a wide range of increasingly complex and multifaceted "peace operations."⁽¹⁹⁾ More particularly for the purposes of this discussion, included under the current peacekeeping umbrella are many elements of emergency humanitarian assistance, relief and reconstruction, even while conflicts are still ongoing -- as can be seen from the following list of the expanding variety of UN responsive activities:

- Monitoring and even running elections, as in Namibia, El Salvador, Angola, Cambodia and Mozambique;
- Protecting inhabitants of a region, whether the majority or minorities, from the threat or use of force - including that of the government of the region and/or country. (...)
- Protecting designated "safe areas," such as certain towns in Bosnia, from attack;
- Ensuring the partial demilitarisation of particular areas, such as around Sarajevo and Gorazde in Bosnia;
- Guarding the weapons surrendered by or taken from the parties to a conflict;
- Assuring the delivery of humanitarian relief supplies and the performance of a wide range of other humanitarian tasks during conflicts, especially in the former Yugoslavia and Somalia;
- Assisting in the reconstruction of governmental or police functions after a civil war, including in El Salvador and Cambodia [now Haiti]; and

(19) Under Secretary General for Political Affairs, Marrack Goulding, quoted in John Roper *et al.*, *Keeping the Peace in the Post-Cold War Era: Strengthening Multilateral Peacekeeping*, the Trilateral Commission, New York. 1993, p. 2. On the contemporary types of peacekeeping compared to that in the classical period, see Goulding, "The Evolution of United Nations Peacekeeping," *International Affairs*, Vol. 69, No. 3, 1993, p. 451-64.

- Reporting violations of the laws of armed conflict (international humanitarian law) by belligerents.⁽²⁰⁾

The money spent on peacekeeping (US\$ 8.3 billion from 1948-1992, most of that since 1988) of course pales in comparison with vast global military expenditures, estimated at \$30 trillion, over the same period. In that sense preventive response seems cheap. Nevertheless, there are deepening doubts about whether continuing the escalation in the size, intensity and cost of military/humanitarian peace-keeping (-making; -building; -enforcement) is a sustainable proposition for the international community.⁽²¹⁾ In place of the doctrine of "assertive multilateralism" that emerged several years ago are attempts to re-establish limits to operational commitments. In early May 1994, a Security Council presidential statement "listed six factors that must be taken into account when the establishment of a new operation is under consideration." That was followed within days by the U.S. government's Presidential Decision Directive (PDD) 25, which imposed a number of conditions relating to selectivity and effectiveness that must be met before there can be U.S. support for multilateral peace operations.⁽²²⁾

Critics argue that these reservations were an unfortunate factor in the delayed and inadequate international response to the Rwandan tragedy⁽²³⁾, and that such paper criteria cannot turn back the fundamentally altered circumstances in which peacekeepers, however defined, will increasingly find themselves "interposed within active wars, protecting

(20) Adam Roberts, "The Crisis in UN Peacekeeping," *Survival*, Vol. 36, No. 3, Autumn 1994, p. 97.

(21) Compare, for example, the critical differences in outlook between the Roberts article and an earlier similar survey by Michael Renner, *Critical Juncture: The Future of Peacekeeping*, Worldwatch Paper No. 114, Washington D.C., Worldwatch Institute, May 1993. See also the rising volume of conflicting views and recriminations observed in "Mission Impossible: The United Nations Contemplates a Pullout from the Quagmire That Is Bosnia," *Maclean's*, 12 December 1994, p. 28ff.

(22) Roberts (1994), p. 108f.

(23) Milton Leitenberg, "Rwanda, 1994: International Incompetence Produces Genocide," *Peacekeeping & International Relations*, November/December 1994, p. 6-10.

humanitarian relief columns, providing shelter and protection to trapped civilian refugees, caring for the sick and wounded from the war zones."⁽²⁴⁾

The world of future humanitarian emergencies will not likely conform to the conditions laid down by politicians, planners or auditors. Yet there are many legitimate concerns about the militarisation of humanitarian interventions, about human rights becoming a "lost agenda" within integrated military-political operations, and about too much attention to late high-cost "cures" and not enough to improving early warning systems and response mechanisms for the timely deployment of fact-finding, diplomatic, and other conflict-avoiding interventions. Above all, opinions are divided over whether humanitarian and (military) "peacemaking" operations, which are not intrinsically compatible, can be combined in ways that do not cause both to suffer.⁽²⁵⁾

D. Civilian Roles and Non-Military Responses to Humanitarian Crises

Among those most concerned with these recent trends are the growing numbers of civilian personnel, non-governmental organizations (NGOs) and citizens groups which are now engaged in the international response to calamities arising from armed conflicts. The vast majority (over 80%) of the victims of today's conflicts are civilians, and ultimately it is the local people in strife-torn countries who must rebuild the peace in their shattered societies. NGO channels, some with sophisticated networks of their own, are often best placed on the ground to perform tasks ranging from the most basic delivery of humanitarian relief to the political reconstruction roles of mediation and election monitoring, and beyond that to the normative reconstruction of "truth commissions," war crimes investigations and other forms of human rights redress.

NGOs obviously lack the capabilities of military forces for surveillance and security, massive air and sea lifts, logistics, landmine clearing, etc. But for most humanitarian

(24) Kevin O'Brien, "Guest Editorial," *Peacekeeping & International Relations*, September/October 1994.

(25) Matthews (1994). See also the arguments debated in *Peacekeeping & International Relations*: Mita Bhattachariya, "Civil Conflict and the Problem of Armed Humanitarian Intervention," July/August 1994, p. 4-5, and Captain Patrick O'Halloran, "The Problem of Armed Humanitarian Intervention II," September/October 1994, p. 5-6.

intervention purposes, their work is essential, and can be done for much less money than if left to paid officials. Coordination is a chronic problem, but many NGOs have been working among themselves to develop operational guidelines for quick responses and on ways to increase inter-agency cooperation.⁽²⁶⁾

Humanitarian agencies are currently devoting over \$2 billion annually to responding to emergency situations. The UN Department of Humanitarian Affairs estimates the total requirement for relief to be \$4-5 billion, and rising each year. Many NGOs are worried that this financial drain, coupled with the spiralling costs of UN peacemaking operations with a humanitarian component, are competing with resources for long-term development assistance, not with military and defence allocations. The consequences could be perverse. As Ed Tsui, Chief of the Office of the Under Secretary for Humanitarian Affairs in the UN Secretariat has observed: "what is urgent is not necessarily what is most important in the long term."⁽²⁷⁾

Beyond the emergency reaction (and after the cameras leave), the real test of a sustained international response comes with the support that is marshalled for the economic, social, political and normative rehabilitation of the devastated region. Yet such support is often slow to arrive or barely forthcoming. As a case in point, the new coalition government in Rwanda has been experiencing great difficulties in rebuilding a functioning state in the absence of international aid. Underfunding has also severely hampered investigations of war crimes in the former Yugoslavia and Rwanda.⁽²⁸⁾

Mohamed Sahnoun, the diplomatic representative sent by the UN to assess the situation for humanitarian intervention in Somalia in early 1992, and who was later withdrawn when his advice was not followed, argues strongly that externally based reactive "quick fixes" can themselves lead to disaster. He laments the fact that, while resources for military peacekeeping have increased ten-fold, development aid decreased in 1993 by 10%, perhaps

(26) See the excerpts from a discussion paper by Kumar Rupesinghe, Secretary General of a leading NGO coalition, *International Alert*, "Humanitarian Agencies and Armed Conflict," *Ploughshares Monitor*, December 1994, p. 17.

(27) Testimony to the Special Joint Senate-House Committee Reviewing Canadian Foreign Policy, New York, 16 September 1994.

(28) Thomas Warrick, "Crime against Humanity: International Effort to Hold Individuals Accountable for Genocide in Jeopardy," *The Ottawa Citizen*, 27 December 1994.

"creating the conditions for future Rwandas." The real issue, he thinks, is whether the international system can be mobilized for early preventive interventions, before the issue becomes one of planning for worst-case militarized recourses. "Diplomacy should always come first - and it should be done with great seriousness."⁽²⁹⁾

Others involved in humanitarian diplomacy agree that every possible avenue should be explored prior to putting troops on the ground, or even when they are there, to minimize resorts to force to achieve humanitarian objectives. Speaking to a parliamentary committee reviewing Canadian foreign policy in New York in September 1994, Steffan de Mistura, Director of Public Affairs for UNICEF, contended that courageous, ingenious and purely humanitarian techniques of intervention, on a small scale at the right time, can make a critical difference. He recounted a personal example in which a mission to protect children in the besieged Croatian city of Dubrovnik--with a satellite connection along to capture media attention--was able to embarrass the leadership of the attacking forces enough to bring about an end to the bombardment of the city.

Unfortunately, these successes to have been all too rare and have seemed insignificant compared to the drama of large-scale "armed humanitarianism." Moreover, the role of the world media in generating international public pressure at an early stage of conflict, and catalyzing emergency responses to humanitarian crises, can itself be a very mixed blessing over the longer term.⁽³⁰⁾

Yet, the demand for the international community to respond cannot wait for all of the unresolved issues to be settled. Risks will always be present. The hope is that each experience-- positive, negative, or both--will add to the knowledge base that can be used to avoid repeating mistakes and to improve mechanisms for future interventions. As one analyst concludes:

(29) Mohamed Sahnoun, "Flashlights over Mogadishu," *The New Internationalist*, December 1994, p. 11. (Sahnoun is currently a Pearson Fellow at the Ottawa-based International Development Research Centre.)

(30) Thomas Weiss observes that: "As well as dramatizing needs, publicizing human rights abuse, stimulating action, and generating resources, the media have distorted the kinds of assistance provided, skewed the allocation of resources and personnel among geographical areas, ignored the role of local humanitarians, and focused international attention on the perceived bungling of various agencies" Weiss (1994), p. 152.

Political, demographic and environmental stresses suggest that these complex crises will keep on erupting. Discarding the potential for effective international responses out of disappointment with early failures isn't an answer. The system needs more work and more support, not less.⁽³¹⁾

CANADIAN PERSPECTIVES ON HUMANITARIAN INTERVENTION

Canada has an enviable record of responding to appeals from the international community. Since 1947, over 90,000 Canadians have participated in UN and non-UN peacekeeping missions. Canada has been actively involved in virtually all UN interventions. Currently, some 2,700 Canadian personnel are engaged in seven of 17 ongoing UN peace operations, representing about 3.5% of the total personnel contributions from member states.⁽³²⁾

Canada is also an internationally respected development aid donor, contributing many billions of dollars to poorer countries, including substantial sums for emergency international humanitarian assistance, which have represented a growing part of the budget of the Canadian International Development Agency (CIDA) in recent years. Nearly \$83 million was allocated for this in the fiscal year 1994-95, with actual costs probably exceeding that sum as a result of rising demands flowing from Canadian involvement in the increasingly complex military-civilian humanitarian interventions discussed above.

Canada's program addresses issues of support for refugees and displaced persons, natural disaster response, and disaster preparedness aimed at strengthening the capacities of disaster-prone developing countries to deal with emergency situations. Canada has sought to improve rapid-response and preparedness levels, in keeping with the objectives of the current International Decade for Natural Disaster Reduction, and has provided support through international organizations and NGOs for activities such as disaster management training,

(31) Matthews (1994).

(32) The numbers are from the summary in *Peacekeeping & International Relations* and apply as of 30 September 1994. It is significant to note that the majority of peacekeeping troops are from developing countries; the G-7 countries together account for only 18.5% of personnel contributions, although they finance--usually later than sooner--most of the peacekeeping budget.

development of regional emergency telecommunications plans, technical training, simulation and community workshops.⁽³³⁾

Notwithstanding this experience, Canada, along with other countries, is facing some difficult dilemmas and choices regarding its continued participation in international humanitarian interventions, especially in post-Cold-War contexts where there is the potential for UN-sanctioned force to be applied against intrastate belligerents in defence of humanitarian objectives. Canadian foreign policy clearly shifted in the 1990s towards a more interventionist normative posture. However, as several analysts cautioned--

...there is no clear consensus in Canada or anywhere else on the precise criteria that would lead international institutions or a collection of states to intervene in the domestic affairs of other states, although a variety of criteria have been suggested including the severity of human rights violations, the exhaustion of alternative measures to protect victims, the willingness of the victims to be helped, the need to keep the intervention proportional to the violations or the minimum force required, the impartiality of the states or institution suggesting the intervention, and the approval of the Security Council. Without some specific agreed criteria, it will be difficult for Canada or any other state to be consistent in its decisions ...⁽³⁴⁾

Canadian ardour for a "ready-aye-ready" response to UN appeals has cooled considerably with the increasing threats to the safety of Canadian peacekeeping personnel in Bosnia. And the serious charges against several commando-trained Canadian troops sent to Somalia under the blue flag has strengthened calls, including those of parliamentary committees, to give more attention to peacekeeping preparation and training needs, and to bring new

(33) Canadian International Development Agency, *1994-95 Estimates: Part III Expenditure Plan*, p. 54-55. In the wake of the devastating earthquake in Japan in mid-January 1995, it is noteworthy that a world conference on the topic of improving natural disaster preparedness was held in Yokohama in May 1994.

(34) Tom Keating and Nicholas Gammer, "The 'New Look' in Canada's Foreign Policy," *International Journal*, Autumn 1993, p. 740.

approaches to the Canadian response.⁽³⁵⁾ One commentator has even suggested that a new concept altogether be considered:

Instead of sending lightly armed ground troops to risk their lives in unresolvable conflicts, we should begin to develop a high-tech, highly mobile disaster-relief force. (...)

If there is one thing this world is not short of, it is disasters, both natural and man-made, but we never seem to be prepared for them. There is never enough shelter, clean water, emergency transportation, rescue equipment or medical staff.

It should be well within Canada's industrial and political capacity to put together two state-of-the-art relief task forces, one based on the east coast, the other on the west. Each could have a hospital ship, a jumbo-sized hospital aircraft, helicopters, hovercraft and the necessary technical and communications support to allow them to cope with medical and ecological emergencies.

They could be assigned to the UN when needed. However, unlike regular peacekeeping forces, they could also be deployed independently of the UN.⁽³⁶⁾

During the Canadian foreign policy and defence reviews of 1994, few voices called for Canada to respond less to urgent global appeals or to pull back from participation in UN missions. The idea of Canada as a leading humanitarian state seems firmly entrenched, even if the image of an "international boy scout" has given way to less comforting reconsideration.⁽³⁷⁾ Many of the witnesses before the parliamentary committees conducting

(35) For examination of these issues see: House of Commons Standing Committee on National Defence and Veterans Affairs, *The Dilemmas of a Committed Peacekeeper*, Report, Issue No. 49, June 1993; Henry Wiseman, "United Nations Peacekeeping and Canadian Policy: A Reassessment," *Canadian Foreign Policy*, Fall 1993, p. 137-48; Alex Morisson, ed., *The Changing Face of Peacekeeping*, The Canadian Institute of Strategic Studies, Toronto, 1993; Joseph Jockel, *Canada and International Peacekeeping*, Canadian Institute of Strategic Studies and Centre for Strategic and International Studies, Toronto and Washington D.C., 1994; Robin Hay, *Military and Security Institutions: Challenges and Roles in Democratization and Development*, Martello Paper, Centre for International Relations, Queen's University, Kingston, forthcoming 1995.

(36) Hal Jones, "Specializing in Disaster," *The Gazette*, (Montreal), 17 December 1994.

(37) See, for example, Chris Giannou, "Canada Can Lead with New Alliances," *The Ottawa Citizen*, 8 May 1994; Marie Paré, "État humanitaire, ou humanitarisme d'État?," *Le Devoir*, 30 March, 1994.

the public reviews suggested the government support more non-military alternative forms of involvement in conflict and crisis situations. Among the ideas brought forward were:

- Involving NGOs in international early warning and crisis monitoring systems, by developing avenues whereby NGOs operating in regions of tension can provide timely information about environmental, social and economic conditions that threaten peace;
- Encouragement and financial support for Canadian NGO efforts in informal or citizen diplomacy;
- Redirection of resources to preventive diplomacy mechanisms including strengthened recourse to the World Court, arbitration, mediation and conciliation services (such as those developed in the CSCE/OSCE), training diplomats in techniques of nonviolent intervention; arms embargoes, humanitarian cease-fires and other innovative conflict resolution approaches.⁽³⁸⁾

A number of groups endorsed the development of new international institutions, such as an "International Criminal Court" to punish humanitarian offences. And despite some unhappiness with the record of the United Nations, many Canadians have also called for the bolstering of its capacities in the areas of intelligence-gathering, communications, coordination, command and control of emergency humanitarian operations. Project Ploughshares favoured proposals for "a set of criteria for measuring conditions which should automatically lead to a full UN review of needs related to natural or human-caused disaster and which, given certain pre-defined conditions, would 'automatically command the attention of the UN Security Council'."⁽³⁹⁾

The comprehensive submission of the Canadian Committee for the Fiftieth Anniversary of the United Nations also contained numerous recommendations for enhancing the effectiveness of peacemaking and humanitarian interventions. More controversially, the

(38) For a discussion of some Canadian examples see Robert Miller, ed., *Aid as Peacemaker: Canadian Development Assistance and Third World Conflict*, Carleton University Press, Ottawa, 1992, p. 161-98.

(39) Project Ploughshares, "Building Peace," Joint submission to the parliamentary special joint committees reviewing Canadian defence and foreign policies, April 1994, p. 5 (citing Larry Minear, Thomas Weiss, and Kurt Campbell, *Humanitarianism and War: Learning the Lessons from Recent Armed Conflicts*, Occasional Papers Series, Thomas Watson, Jr., Institute for International Studies, Brown University, 1991).

Committee advocated creation of "international peace enforcement units to be deployed either as a quick reaction force or in other situations of high risk." Canada was urged to contribute troops, "to be drawn on a volunteer basis," which would be "more heavily armed and could undertake a variety of tasks from providing protection for humanitarian relief work to securing ceasefire lines." In the longer term, the recommendation was for the UN to control a volunteer force of its own.⁽⁴⁰⁾

The Canadian government has been very actively considering these issues. In a speech to the UN Association in Canada, Prime Minister Chrétien spoke of the compelling need for the UN "to move quickly in a crisis situation. It is unacceptable for the international community to stand on the sidelines in the face of humanitarian disaster. The UN needs the tools to fulfil a more difficult mandate into the next century."⁽⁴¹⁾ Earlier, addressing the UN General Assembly, Foreign Affairs Minister André Ouellet, observed that: "Too often, the intervention of the United Nations comes too late, is too slow and is carried out under inadequate conditions. ... we must strengthen the UN system's capacity for preventive action."

In that regard, Canada has prepared for the Secretary General an inventory of qualified persons to assist in preventive diplomacy missions. Ouellet also urged that UN organs such as ECOSOC (the Economic and Social Council) hold periodic public hearings, "with a view to assisting the UN system to better anticipate problems and develop strategies for attacking the economic and social causes of conflicts. The findings of its hearings could be provided to the Security Council and the Secretary General so they can develop appropriate preventive measures."⁽⁴²⁾ In general, Canadian approaches have stressed the importance of linking the

(40) *Canadian Priorities for United Nations Reform: Proposals for Policy Changes by the United Nations and the Government of Canada*, Prepared by the Canadian Committee for the Fiftieth Anniversary of the United Nations, Ottawa, June 1994, p. 21.

(41) Speech by Prime Minister Jean Chrétien to the United Nations Association in Canada, Ottawa, 24 October, 1994, p. 4.

(42) Notes for an Address by the Honourable André Ouellet, Minister of Foreign Affairs, to the 49th General Assembly of the United Nations, New York, 29 September 1994, p. 4-5.

peacemaking and humanitarian-response agenda to the development agenda, and in particular to the civic and normative reconstruction tasks of post-conflict "peacebuilding."⁽⁴³⁾

With respect to the international community's rapid intervention capability, Canada hosted an international conference of troop-contributing countries in the spring of 1994 to discuss problems associated with political direction, command and control and the training of peacekeeping operations personnel. In his speech to the General Assembly in September, Minister Ouellet announced that Canada would open a new centre for peacekeeping research and training in Cornwallis, Nova Scotia. Furthermore, Canada would "conduct an in-depth review of the short-, medium-, and long-term options available to strengthen the UN's rapid response capability in times of crisis. Among these options ... the time has come to study the possibility, over the longer term, of creating a permanent UN military force."

The reports of the parliamentary defence and foreign policy reviews, in October and November respectively, were supportive of such initiatives. However, the former warned against too narrow a specialization of the armed forces for peacekeeping roles, and the latter admonished that "Canada should resist pressures to become 'the 911 of the international community'." In the future, the committee advised:

What Canada can do is to choose when possible those operations which make best use of the things Canadians do best (e.g., highly professional military skills, air transport and traffic control, logistics, engineering and communications, medical teams, policing and civilian mediation). It may be possible, for example, to combine elements of the "vanguard" concept with elements of the enhanced civilian-military approach, so that Canada could help the UN to intervene swiftly, but could then contribute a smaller force to interface with civilian actors for the longer haul. Such an

(43) As Stephen Randall observes, even in the most "successful" UN interventions, "peacebuilding is a lengthy and complex process in which the end of armed conflict is only a beginning in the creation of civil society." ("Peacekeeping in the Post-Cold War Era: The United Nations and the 1993 Cambodian Elections," *Behind the Headlines*, Canadian Institute of International Affairs, Spring 1994.) See also Stephen Baranyi and Liisa North, *The United Nations in El Salvador: The Promise and Dilemmas of an Integrated Approach to Peace*, Centre for Research on Latin America and the Caribbean, York University, 1994. For a UN perspective on these issues cf. Alvaro de Soto and Graciana del Castillo, "Obstacles to Peacebuilding," *Foreign Policy*, Spring 1994, p. 69-83.

approach would probably mean limiting Canadian involvement to fewer missions but with more significant participation in each.⁽⁴⁴⁾

In order to improve cooperation and coordination among the various international, national, governmental and non-governmental actors in peace and humanitarian operations, the committee cited suggestions for "a program of personnel secondments, a systematic exchange of information, and the establishment of an ongoing tripartite liaison body [presumably involving UN peacekeeping structures, humanitarian agencies, NGOs and voluntary aid providers] or roundtable to follow Canada's participation in emergency humanitarian operations."⁽⁴⁵⁾

The *Defence White Paper* released in December 1994 emphasized that Canadian responses to security and humanitarian emergencies should adhere to certain identified "characteristics in the purpose, design and operational conduct of a mission that enhance that its prospects for success." Missions "must not become ends in themselves; they must be part of a comprehensive strategy to secure long-term, realistic, and achievable solutions."⁽⁴⁶⁾ The White Paper outlined a number of conditions to be met in achieving operational effectiveness.⁽⁴⁷⁾ But, despite such challenges in a period of fiscal downsizing and the

(44) *Canada's Foreign Policy: Principles and Priorities for the Future*, Report of the Special Joint Committee of the Senate and the House of Commons Reviewing Canadian Foreign Policy, November 1994, p. 18-19.

(45) *Ibid.*, p. 19.

(46) Government of Canada, *1994 Defence White Paper*, Ottawa, December 1994, p. 28.

(47) A study of the Rwandan mission prepared for the Department of Foreign Affairs also makes several important related recommendations:

- Canada should encourage the holding of working meetings of UN troop contributing nations, humanitarian agencies, and human rights agencies (UN and NGO), to create standard operating procedures and model Rules of Engagement for UN peacekeeping and humanitarian missions. This should feed into similar processes for "RoEs" for UN humanitarian assistance or human rights mission members.
- The Canadian Armed Forces should lead by example in carrying out more extensive training for all of its members on peacekeeping in general, and the cultural and political contexts of peacekeeping specifically. In addition, its standby troops and individuals designated to take on individual roles such as force Commander, should receive additional intensive training that is more specific to the country and society that they will be operating in. The issues of conflict resolution, humanitarianism and human rights must be integral to this training.

Larose-Edwards (1994), p. 23-24.

concerns posed by recent peacekeeping failings, the government reaffirmed a strong dedication to what it described as Canada's "specialization" in multilateral operations:

The rehabilitation of areas that have been the scene of armed conflict represents an important contribution that the training, skills, and equipment of our armed forces can make to security abroad. Past instances of such contributions include the provision of humanitarian relief supplies and the use of engineers to rebuild infrastructure and remove land mines. Following the Soviet withdrawal from Afghanistan, Canada took the additional step of training refugees to recognize and disarm land mines. These activities can make an invaluable contribution in building a more durable peace, and the Government will explore ways in which the Canadian Forces can contribute further.

Building upon growing experience with combined military-civilian missions, Canadian armed forces "have a critical role to play at the outset ... in the establishment of a secure environment and the provision of basic support (such as transport, emergency medical assistance, logistics and communications). Over the long-term, however, reconstructive activities--be they administration and enforcement of civil law, the provision of medical care, or the distribution of humanitarian aid--are best left to civilian organizations."⁽⁴⁸⁾

Early in 1995, work is proceeding on several fronts. A joint committee of Foreign Affairs and Defence department officials has been established to study the issue of a rapid-reaction force capability, and a briefing paper on the subject was released in January. A series of conferences will take place starting in February. In April, the committee's work will be reviewed by a consultative group of diplomats, officials, soldiers and academics from the international community. Major-General Roméo Dallaire, the Canadian commander of the UN Forces in Rwanda until August 1994 (another Canadian, Major-General Guy Tousignant, currently commands the 5,800-member UNAMIR contingent), has been outspoken in calling for change: "The UN must be given the capability necessary to respond to the increasing number of humanitarian catastrophes around the world. We have a human, legal and moral obligation to prevent murder, crimes against humanity and certainly genocide." In addition to the creation of a standby emergency force with military capabilities, Dallaire believes the UN urgently requires: a headquarters senior crisis management corps, a revamped administration and

(48) 1994 *Defence White Paper*, p. 32-33.

contingency fund for peacekeeping, a beefed-up humanitarian affairs department, a global media centre, and an intelligence-gathering capacity of its own.⁽⁴⁹⁾

Although Canada's initiatives for UN reform along these lines may be viewed sceptically by some other governments, they are evidence of a continuing Canadian willingness to assert leadership in an increasingly dangerous area of international organization and action. The Canadian position, following in the tradition of Pearsonian multilateralist diplomacy, is not to shrink from responding responsibly to the imperatives and exigencies of a growing toll of humanitarian emergencies around the world. As the former Canadian prime minister and Nobel peace prize laureate characteristically put the Canadian perspective in 1968:

If we believe the world is made up of powerful irrational forces, that anarchy and dissolution are always closer than we think, then we have some reason for optimism, not only because we are still here; but because, under the pressure or, if you like, the blackmail of facts, we are moving forward, however slowly.⁽⁵⁰⁾

(49) "Delegates to Study Feasibility of UN Army," *The Globe and Mail* (Toronto), 5 January 1995; Dave Todd, "Canada Seeks Stronger Peacekeeping," *The Ottawa Citizen*, 5 January 1995; "UN Must Give Troops Freedom to Take Action, Canadian Says," *The Ottawa Citizen*, 27 January 1995; "Aftermath of Genocide," *Maclean's*, 6 February 1995, p. 32-34; Remarks by Major-General Roméo Dallaire to the Library of Parliament Distinguished Visitors Seminar, "The Crisis in UN Peacekeeping," Ottawa, 27 January 1995.

(50) Lester B. Pearson, cited in John Cruikshank, "Our Last, Best Hope," *The World in 1995*, The Globe and Mail Report on Business Magazine and The Economist Publications, January 1995, p. 19. For a long-term perspective, see also J. Martin Rochester, *Waiting for the Millenium: The United Nations and the Future of World Order*, University of South Carolina Press, Columbia, 1993.



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